

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

DPW-01 IO-12 EUR-25 AID-20 SR-02 ORM-03 RSR-01 /143 W

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R 260344 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASGDC 9176

USDEL FRANCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4944

E. O; 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: MR 2 WEEKLY OVERVIEW, MAR. 20-25, 1973

FOL TEL SENT ACTION IMMEDIATE SAIGON FROM NHA TRANG DTD MAR.
25, 1973 RPTD TO YOU FOR YOU INFO

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L NHA TRANG 325

1. THE GVN DISPLAYED SOME CURIOUS AND POSSIBLY CONTRADICTIONARY
SIGNS DURING THE PAST WEEK: SOME PREPARATIONS FOR WAR, SOME
TOLERANCE OF PEACE, AND A LOT OF BUSINESS- AS- USUAL THAT AT
TIMES SEEMED TO PUT US BACK IN 1970 OR 1971, AS IF THERE HAD
BEEN NO ENEMY OFFENSIVE IN THE SPRING OF 1972 AND NO PARIS
AGREEMENT ONLY EIGHT WEEKS AGO.

2. MILITARILY, WEEK WAS RELATIVELY QUIET, AS PRECEDING WEEK
HAD BEEN. ENEMY FORCES CONTINUED TO LAUNCH SCATTERED GROUND
ATTACKS AND ABF AGAINST ARVN AND TERRITORIAL- FORCE POSITIONS
IN COASTAL PROVINCES, PARTICULARLY BINH DINH BUT ALSO PHU YEN
AND BINH THUAN. AGGRESSIVE PATROLLING BY ARVN RANGERS IN PLEI
YUT AREA OF WESTERN PLEIKU CONTINUED TO PROMPT ENEMY RESPONSE,
SO ARTILLERY- VS- MORTAR DUELS CONTINUE, BUT AT DIMINISHED
RATES, ALONG QL-19 BETWEEN THAN AN AND DUC CO. HARDLY HAD
THE GVN RESUMED RAIL SERVICE BETWEEN TUY HOA AND THAP CHAM
WHEN THE TRAINS BEGAN TO ATTRACT VIET CONG ATTENTION; THEY
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MINED A REPAIR TRAIN MAR 20 IN DEO CA (VUNG RO) PASS IN PHU
YEN AND PUT BOULDERS ON TRACK IN KHANH HOA NIGHT OF MAR 22-23,

BRIEFLY DELAYING THE SOUTHBOUND MORNING FRIEGHT.

3. MORE PACIFICALLY, HOWEVER, BGEN. CAM OF THE ARVN 23 RD DIVISION HAS CUT HIS ARTILLERY EXPENDITURES IN KONTUM TO 100 ROUNDS PER DAY OR LESS, ONLY A FRACTION OF AMOUNT THE DIVISION FIRED OFF ON A TYPICAL DAY IN FEBRUARY. THIS IS A FUNCTION OF POLICY AND NOT OF NECESSITY, FOR THE 23 RD, AFTER RUNNING DANGEROUSLY LOW LAST MONTH, NOW HAS STOCKS THAT IN SOME CALIBERS ARE 250 PERCENT OF AUTHORIZED LEVELS. CAM'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH ENEMY FORCES IN AREA NORTH OF KONTUM CITY ARE PROCEEDING INCONCLUSIVELY, WHILE AT MUCH LOWER ECHELONS AND ONLY A FEW MILES AWAY JARAI TROOPS ON BOTH SIDES ARE INVOLVED IN ALMOST DAILY SHOUTED CONVERSATIONS AND FRIENDLY GESTURES FROM OPPOSITE SIDES OF POKO RIVER. SOME OF THE JARAI AMONG THE ALMOST 7,000 REFUGEES WHO HAVE RETURNED FROM PLEIKU IN LAST TWO WEEKS MAY ALREADY BE GOING OVER INTO ENEMY- CONTROLLED AREAS BY DAY TO WORK THE LAND, AS ENEMY TROOPS HAVE BEEN INVITING THEM TO DO.

4. BACK DOWN ON THE COAST, HOWEVER, THERE IS NEW- FOUND OR AT LEAST NEWLY- EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT ENEMY OFFENSIVE ACTION. PROVINCE CHIEFS IN BINH DINH AND PHU YEN HAVE BOTH TOLD US THEY EXPECT RENEWED FIGHTING SHORTLY AFTER X- PLUS-60 AND HAVE IDENTIFIED AREAS THEY BELIEVE ENEMY WILL HIT. IN THE NEXT BREATH, HOWEVER, THE BINH DINH PC ASSURED US THAT HE AND THE 22 ND DIVISION WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE WHATEVER THE ENEMY MAY MOUNT. BINH DINH PC MEANWHILE IS PLANNING-- AND 22 ND DIV HAS ALREADY INITIATED-- OPERATIONS TO CLEAR LIGHTLY- DEFENDED ENEMY AREAS IN NORTH AND WEST OF THE PROVINCE TO IMPROVE SECURITY AND OPEN UP RICE LANDS, MAINLY TO FACILITATE RESETTLEMENT OF SOME OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES NOW PACKED INTO THE ENORMOUS PHU TAI CAMPS OR STRUNG OUT ALONG QL-1 IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL PORTIONS OF PROVINCE. THIRTEEN THOUSAND REFUGEES HAVE RETURNED TO NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF PROVINCE THIS MONTH, BUT OTHERS HAVE REFUSED TO GO UNTIL SECURITY IMPROVES AND RTV PROGRAM NOW TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED.

5. MEANWHILE, THE MR 2 COMMANDER WAS MAKING ROUNDS OF PROVINCE HQ, RELAYING EMPHASIS ON CIVILIAN PROGRAMS HE HEARD FROM THIEU ON MAR 6 AND SPREADING GOSPEL THAT CIVIL SERVANTS AND

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MILITARY STAFF SHOULD WORK HARD, EXHIBIT CONCERN FOR PUBLIC WEAL, AND GENERALLY SET GOOD EXAMPLES.

6. NATIONALIST POLITICAL SCENE-- INCLUDING POPULAR FRONT-- REMAINED LARGELY QUIESCENT. AS ONE REPORTING OFFICER REMARKED, " IN THIS PROVINCE THERE MAY BE POLITICAL PARTIES, BUT THERE ISN'T ANY POLITICAL ACTIVITY." ONLY EXCEPTION WAS SURFACING OF A TINY DOMESTIC " THIRD FORCE," FIRST SUCH ACTIVITY REPORTED IN MR 2. LOCALE IS BINH THUAN, AND MEN INVOLVED ARE MAINLY

PRESENT OR FORMER ELECTED OFFICIALS, THE CHRONIC OPPOSITIONISTS FOR WHOM PROVINCE ELECTORATE HAS OFTEN SHOWN ITS PREDILECTION. SO FAR THIS HANDFUL OF MEN APPEARS TO HAVE DONE NOTHING MORE THAN DISTRIBUTE COPIES OF BIG MINH'S FEB 22 LETTER AND TALK UP IDEAS IN PRIVATE WITH POTENTIAL SYMPATHIZERS; THEY HAVE NO "MOVEMENT" AS YET. HOWEVER, VIGOROUS AND AUTHORITARIAN PROVINCE CHIEF, COL. NGO TAN NGHIA, CONSIDERS THIS INCIPIENT "THIRD FORCE" DANGEROUS AND MAY ALREADY HAVE BEGUN CAMPAIGN OF INTIMIDATION.

7. INTERESTINGLY, BOTH CAMPS HAVE ALREADY TALKED WITH US ABOUT THE SITUATION: NGHIA TO TELL US THE "THIRD FORCE" PROPONENTS ARE TOOLS OF THE VIET CONG AND IMPLICITLY TO DISCOURAGE ANY CONTACT WITH THEM; THE PROPONENTS THEMSELVES TO ASK FOR OUR "PROTECTION" OR TO PLEAD THAT WE PRESSURE GVN INTO REAL IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 11 OF PARIS AGREEMENT. NEITHER CAMP GREATLY SATISFIED OR REASSURED WHEN WE REPLIED THAT WE HOPED TO SEE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WORK OUT THEIR OWN POLITICAL SOLUTION.

8. PEACE-KEEPING MACHINERY REMAINS ABOUT THE SAME AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. NO FIRM INDICATION WHETHER PRG AT PHAN THIET (ONLY PRG IN TRUCE REGION 3 OR 4) WILL LEAVE WHEN DRV REPS DEPART THIS WEEK. ON ICCS SIDE, ONE OR TWO SUB-REGIONAL TEAMS IN TR 3 GOT ADDITIONAL INVESTIGATING ASSIGNMENTS THIS WEEK, BUT THESE ARE BASED ON SKIMPY AND SOMETIMES ILL-CHOSEN GVN INCIDENT REPORTS. FEW INVESTIGATIONS KNOWN TO BE IN PROGRESS AT THE MOMENT. ICCS OTHERWISE IS GENERALLY HOUSEBOUND AND BORED. WE HAVE HAD SECOND INSTANCE (FIRST BAN ME THUOT, NOW PHAN RANG) OF HUNGDEL BEING REPLACED FOR REPORTED EXCESSIVE FRATERNIZING WITH FREE-WORLD PERSONNEL.

9. IN SUM, WE APPROACH X-PLUS-60 WITH VIRTUALLY NO EFFECTIVE PEACE-KEEPING APPARATUS AND FEW CLEAR PATTERNS OF CONDUCT
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REGION-WIDE BY "THE TWO SOUTH VIETNAMESE PARTIES" THAT COULD HELP US ANTICIPATE THEIR BEHAVIOR AFTER THAT DATE.
ENGLE UNQUOTE
BUNKER

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